

# Metropolitan Colours of Europeanization. Institutionalization of Integrated Territorial Investment Structures in the Context of Past Cooperation in Metropolitan Regions

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**Abstract** The paper focuses on the institutional solutions adopted in various Polish metropolitan regions due to the requirement to create structures facilitating the operation of Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) in the 2014–2020 EU financial perspective. This phenomenon is analysed in the light of the process of the launching and functioning of metropolitan cooperation and of the concept of Europeanization. Our considerations are based on the assumption that past attempts to institutionalize metropolitan cooperation influence the process of the creation and functioning of ITI cooperation. Our research has confirmed this proposition. We found various reactions to the top-down incentive in all of the investigated metropolitan regions. In general four main types of situation are identified depending on past metropolitan cooperation and its relation to the ITI institutions. On the national level an interesting “double top-down” pressure was discovered, as the EU guidelines have been made much stricter by the Polish government, turning an incentive for local actors into a must. Finally, Integrated Territorial Investment has enlivened metropolitan governance in Poland, which is interesting to follow in the future, especially as it has no connection to other national regulations proposed for metropolitan regions.

**Keywords** Europeanization · Metropolitan governance · Intermunicipal cooperation · Integrated Territorial Investment · Poland

## Metropolitane Farben der Europäisierung. Die Institutionalisierung von Strukturen der integrierten territorialen Investitionen vor dem Hintergrund bisheriger Zusammenarbeit in den Metropolregionen

**Zusammenfassung** Die polnischen Metropolregionen sind aufgefordert, Strukturen zu entwickeln, die die Durchführung der integrierten territorialen Investitionen (ITI) der EU-Finanzvorschau 2014–2020 ermöglichen. Dieser Beitrag untersucht entsprechende institutionelle Lösungen in verschiedenen polnischen Metropolregionen in Anbetracht des Prozesses der Initiierung und Arbeitsweise der metropolitanen Zusammenarbeit und des Konzepts der Europäisierung. Unsere Überlegungen basieren auf der Annahme, dass vorherige Versuche, metropolitane Zusammenarbeit zu institutionalisieren, Einfluss auf die Initiierung und Arbeitsweise der ITI Zusammenarbeit nehmen. Unsere Untersuchungen bestätigen diese These. Verschiedene Reaktionen zu dem top-down Ansatz wurden in den untersuchten Metropolregionen festgestellt. Abhängig von der bisherigen metropolitanen Zusammenarbeit und der Beziehung dieser zu den ITI-Institutionen wurden vier Haupttypen identifiziert. Auf nationaler Ebene wurde ein interessanter „doppelter top-down“ Effekt aufgedeckt: Die polnische Regierung hat die EU Richtlinien wesentlich strenger gestaltet und hat dadurch einen Anreiz für lokale Akteure zu einem Zwang gewandelt. Schließlich hat ITI metropolitane Governance in Polen belebt. Dies wird auch in der Zukunft interessant sein, vor allem weil ITI keine Verbindung zu

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anderen nationalen Vorschriften für die Metropolregionen aufweist.

**Schlüsselwörter** Europäisierung · Metropolitane Governance · Interkommunale Zusammenarbeit · Integrierte territoriale Investitionen · Polen

## 1 Introduction

Metropolitan governance is an issue which has gained a lot of attention throughout the last century, both from scholars and practitioners. Yet a perfect solution has not been found. The question of how tasks involving an area greater than one administrative unit can be carried out effectively, without depriving the area of autonomy and local democracy, remains open. In the European context, it is strongly influenced by Europeanization processes (Atkinson/Rossignolo 2008; Hamedinger/Wolffhardt 2010). Especially in recent years, more and more attention has been paid to the cities when planning activities funded with the structural funds of the European Union. It is important to analyse the city with its surrounding area from a functional perspective. As a response to the challenges connected with managing the development of such areas, the European Commission proposed a formula of Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI). The form of the new instrument is innovative, but the manner of implementation can be largely based on past experience of cooperation and multi-level governance. In some cases, Integrated Territorial Investment may result in changes in the practices of metropolitan governance.

In this paper, two theoretical frameworks have been implemented to discuss the phenomenon of cooperation under Integrated Territorial Investment. The cooperation theory is based on the assumption that the stability of structures allowing for cooperation has a positive influence on the whole context of cooperation. We therefore investigate relations between Integrated Territorial Investment and the past institutions of metropolitan cooperation. Within the second framework, Integrated Territorial Investment is a great laboratory of research on the phenomenon of Europeanization. On one hand, the implementation of Integrated Territorial Investment is a sign of Europeanization imposed from above which influences solutions adopted at the state and local levels. On the other hand, the reaction of individual urban areas illustrates a bottom-up aspect of Europeanization, as do the national regulations providing specific solutions connected with the general idea provided by the European

Commission.<sup>1</sup> In the light of the above two frameworks, we present the solutions implemented in the urban areas of Poland as a response to the introduction of Integrated Territorial Investment.

There are at least three reasons why focusing on Poland is particularly interesting. First, Poland, despite its 25 years of experience of local government, has hardly any tradition of metropolitan governance. It could therefore be expected that arrangements may be more prone to external influence. Second, there is still little research on metropolitan governance and Europeanization in a post-socialist context. Third, Poland – in contrast to all other EU member states – has made Integrated Territorial Investment compulsory for 17 regional capitals.<sup>2</sup> The need to establish the associations<sup>3</sup> forced many Polish municipalities either to create new metropolitan cooperation structures or to improve the existing ones. There were few cases where solutions compatible with the formal requirements of Integrated Territorial Investment could have been developed on the basis of pre-existing institutions, and even fewer cases where the opportunity to do so was really taken. Therefore, the new institution of Integrated Territorial Investment became a solution (often extremely difficult to implement) that stimulated the process of launching metropolitan cooperation.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

The issue of so-called metropolitan governance has been subject to discussion for over a hundred years and has also been described in Polish literature many times (Swianiewicz 2006; Kaczmarek/Mikuła 2007; Lackowska 2009; Sagan/Canowiecki 2011). Our analysis focuses on the factors that facilitate and hinder cooperation. This helps us to understand the decisions of local governments concerning whether to use existing forms of metropolitan cooperation when establishing ITI structures.

<sup>1</sup> This article came into being in the middle of 2015, at a moment when European and national regulations regarding the establishment of ITI associations were still subject to various interpretations and were being adapted locally, sometimes with modifications. For example, it turned out that ITI associations will probably play the role of intermediate bodies, which may result in changes in the original management and institutional structures established for the purpose of managing Integrated Territorial Investment.

<sup>2</sup> The decision was made to establish separate Integrated Territorial Investments for each of the two biggest agglomerations in one of the 16 Polish NUTS 2 regions (Lubuskie).

<sup>3</sup> The term “ITI association” (Polish *związek ZIT*) was invented for the purpose of the new instrument; the similarity of terms in Polish resulted in ITI associations being mistaken for “joint committees of municipalities” (Polish *związek międzygminny*), operating under the Local Government Act.

In a widely quoted study on metropolitan governance, edited by Heinelt and Kübler (2005), three main facilitators of metropolitan cooperation were described: the willingness to cooperate and the tradition of cooperation, the presence of strong leadership in urban areas, and incentives to cooperate (Kübler/Heinelt 2005: 23). Two of those aspects are of the most profound importance when analysing the relationship between ITI structures and previous forms of cooperation in the metropolitan regions: tradition and incentives. Tradition allows for the formation of the habit of cooperation (Kübler/Heinelt 2005). The creation of fixed and generally accepted (even if informal) forms of interaction facilitates joint problem solving on an ongoing basis, and cooperation itself allows trust to develop among the partners. According to many authors, institutions that are now considered to be model and effective solutions were not created out of nothing (Négrier 2005; Heinelt/Razin/Zimmermann 2011). Sustainable cooperation is widely considered to be a positive phenomenon (Szmigiel-Rawska/Dołzbasz 2012).

In accordance with the above, our assumption is that the operation of ITI structures depends on the past experience of cooperation. We expect ITI institutions based on the pre-existing forms of cooperation between the local governments in Polish urban areas to become platforms of “unforced” cooperation. Under such circumstances, Integrated Territorial Investment would only be an additional formal tool, broadening the scope of joint activities that already existed. Consequently such institutions are likely to be more effective, as partners are more used to the idea of cooperating. The cooperation in such a case may well include a wider range of issues, without being limited only to projects directly connected with Integrated Territorial Investment. Transferring the NUTS 2 level management rights and responsibilities regarding the regional component of EU cohesion policy to the regional governments after 2007 resulted in an increase in their strength as political actors (Ignasiak-Szulc/Jaźwiński 2015: 364). Thus, we can reasonably expect that the metropolitan institutions that have become responsible for Integrated Territorial Investment will also be empowered. At the current phase of development of work on Integrated Territorial Investment, this hypothesis cannot yet be tested. However, it is still worth discussing the shape of Polish metropolitan governance and the modifications caused by the requirement to cooperate under Integrated Territorial Investment, and, furthermore, considering the possible impact of such modifications on metropolitan governance in the nearest future.

According to theories of cooperation, the apparent voluntariness of cooperation is rather illusive. Actually, the partners have to be convinced that there will be something to gain for each of them in joint activities, and their beliefs regarding this matter are complicated by the so-called

“shadow of the future” (Axelrod 1984: 174). This phenomenon is the result of the fact that the profits from individual action are generally visible earlier than the benefits of joint action (in the beginning, there are costs to be borne connected with initiating and organizing cooperation). Therefore, if future interactions (continuation of cooperation) are uncertain (the shadow of the future is short or vague), the incentive to behave in a cooperative way diminishes. Consequently, the partners have to be aware of a positive “shadow of the future” in order to commence cooperation.

External incentives provide an additional stimulus. Integrated Territorial Investment can hardly be considered a clear-cut incentive because the creation of Integrated Territorial Investment was in fact compulsory for the regional capitals (if they wanted to receive EU funds for investment). Nevertheless, there is little doubt about Integrated Territorial Investment being a powerful factor facilitating the cooperation. Sometimes such powerful “incentives” are considered to call the voluntariness of cooperation into question (e.g. the French system of administration, see Négrier 2005; Lackowska/Swianiewicz 2013). The same can be said about ITI regulations. Voluntariness is closely connected with the freedom of choice left to the local actors with regard to the details. Both the formal solutions of Integrated Territorial Investment and the final shape of the cooperation are an effect of local context. Therefore, the process is actually like a vector with two senses: one top-down (related to compulsory regulations) and one bottom-up (connected to discretion of local responses). This brings us to the second issue of our discussion, Europeanization.

In the present paper we follow the understanding of Europeanization offered by political science and referring (in its widest definition) to the expansion of a given political space (Kohler-Koch 1999). We therefore assume that Europeanization is related to integration within the EU<sup>4</sup> and involves spreading similar norms, values, and legal regulations among the member states and actors within them. These are not only adopted by the member states (which would mean top-down), but also co-formulated by the member states (meaning bottom-up Europeanization). Moreover, acknowledging the existence of various actors involved in Europeanization, we have to connect this process with multi-level governance (Hooghe/Marks 2001; Marks/Hooghe 2004). This gives us a possibility to analyse interactions among the four levels of actors involved in an “ITI play”: EU, national government, regional governments and metropolitan institutions. We thus consider both directions

<sup>4</sup> Such an understanding provoked much discussion on the term Europeanization. Some critics claimed that “EU-ization” would be a more appropriate term but, due to language awkwardness, this term has not been adopted (Radaelli 2003; Flockhart 2010).

of Europeanization processes: top-down and bottom-up. From a top-down perspective we focus on adaptation pressure which is exerted on regional and metropolitan actors by national regulations (in a direct way) and EU policy (in an indirect way). Within a bottom-up framework, we take into account not only the opportunities the city-regions have to influence EU policy (which, according to the sceptics, are rather limited), but also a variety of metropolitan reactions to the very same adaptive pressure from the Union. Risse, Cowles and Caporaso (2001: 1), describing the phenomenon in the context of the reactions of particular countries to requirements imposed by the EU, called it the “national colours of Europeanization” (see also Bache 2008: 17). In our research, we will focus on the metropolitan colours of Europeanization.

There are many references in the literature to the impact of the EU on the functioning of towns, cities and metropolitan regions (Atkinson/Rossignolo 2008; Heinelt/Niederhafner 2008; Hamedinger/Wolffhardt 2010). Brenner (2004) does not refer directly to Europeanization, but he places his research on urban rescaling in a European context, making it clear that there is a very important link between the development of metropolitan regions and metropolitan governance on one hand, and the integration of the EU on the other hand. The ITI instrument opened up a new field of empirical research for scholars of complex Europeanization (Bache 2008). Continuing the tradition of research in this regard, we decided to analyse the variety of local responses to ITI requirements. In terms of Europeanization the situation is quite complex due to the fact that the relatively vague ideas included in the recommendations of the European Commission on the creation of ITI structures have been made more specific by the Polish government. Considering the relation between the European Commission and the member states, we observe the top-down establishment of a new mechanism accompanied by general guidelines on how to adopt it.<sup>5</sup> The member states react to this top-down influence by “colouring” these recommendations with a “national colour” of specific rules for implementation. Turning to the relation between the state authorities of Poland and the metropolitan regions, metropolitan actors experienced “double top-down” pressure (from the EU and from the national level), which left them with significantly less discretion than they would have according to EU regulations alone. The strategies applied by metropolitan regions become all the more interesting in the light of these two-level regulations. According to our assumption, local actors maintained the ability to shape reality on a bottom-up basis, in their own local context. This hypothesis stems from the belief that local conditions

are important (Sagan 2000; Zarycki 2002). We decided to analyse the importance of the tradition of cooperation for the reaction to the adaptive pressure from above, examining the relationship between Integrated Territorial Investment and the pre-existing forms of metropolitan cooperation. We assume that the range of possible local decisions and directions of development is the result of factors described by historical institutionalism, i. e. past institutions, events and decisions that shape the process of metropolitan governance building.

### 3 Research Outline

According to our assumption, the imposition of formalized cooperation within Integrated Territorial Investment is a common condition that modifies the shape of pre-existing processes of metropolitan integration in Polish cities. While for a couple of agglomerations, the ITI instrument proved to be an efficient stimulus initiating the creation of formal cooperation, others were already on (or locked into)<sup>6</sup> a path of developing such structures when the stimulus appeared. Therefore, we can assume that despite all the novelty of the instrument itself, the range of possible institutional solutions adopted for the purpose of implementing Integrated Territorial Investment is not the same in every case, but will be the result of previous experiences of cooperation, or of the lack of it.

Let us now pose the following research questions in accordance with the above assumptions:

- How did Polish cities respond to the Europeanization pressure to introduce an ITI instrument?
- What influence did previous experiences of cooperation in Polish metropolises have on the final shape of solutions applied within Integrated Territorial Investment?
- What is the result of the solutions applied for the purpose of ITI management in terms of the possible quality of cooperation in the future? What may be the effects of the implementation of Integrated Territorial Investment in this regard?

We have posed two hypotheses for the purpose of our study. The first of them is that, despite the two-level nature of the regulations (both European and national), local actors maintained the ability to shape reality in the bottom-up direction, developing unique solutions within the local context. As a result, there is a certain degree of diversity among the legal forms of Integrated Territorial Investment in Polish agglomerations, which we call the “metropolitan colours of Europeanization”. The second, auxiliary hypothesis is that

<sup>5</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/guidance\\_iti.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/guidance_iti.pdf) (August 22, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> The situation when the events of the past determine the range of available choices (Szmigiel-Rawska/Dolzbłasz 2012).

**Table 1** Institutions of metropolitan cooperation in Polish agglomerations before the introduction of Integrated Territorial Investment

ITI association	Metropolitan cooperation before 2014	Rating <sup>a</sup>
Białystok	Białystok Metropolitan Area was established in 2009 (20 municipalities declared a will to cooperate)	1
Bydgoszcz & Toruń	Several partnership agreements signed only by the two core cities. Partnership agreement on Bydgoszcz-Toruń Metropolitan Area signed in 2008 (apart from the cities, only the neighbouring counties are members). The cooperation did not come into effect, there is no website and there are many serious conflicts between the core cities	1
Gdańsk (Tricity region)	In 2003, an informal organization called the Metropolitan Council of Gdańsk Bay was established. On the initiative of the Council, the Metropolitan Communication Association of Gdańsk Bay was established in 2006. The operation of the Council came to a halt after several years of moderate activity. The organization became livelier at the end of 2011, when two new organizations were established: the Gdańsk Metropolitan Area Association founded by Gdańsk, and the Metropolitan Forum of Mayors NORDA founded by Gdynia. In the middle of 2015, a decision was made to launch a new institution for the purpose of Integrated Territorial Investment (see also Kołsut 2015). Metropolitan Area Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot incorporated the former Gdańsk Metropolitan Area, whereas NORDA remained a separate body.	Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Association: 4 Tricity as a whole: 3
Gorzów Wielkopolski	No previous metropolitan cooperation (despite the Association of Zielona Góra Agglomeration, which covered a big area of Lubuskie Region, also Gorzów Wielkopolski; yet as Kołsut (2015: 196) claims this association cannot be treated as a typical metropolitan cooperation)	0
Katowice	Established in 2007, the Metropolitan Joint Committee of Upper Silesia is active in numerous fields <sup>b</sup>	5
Kielce	Kielce Metropolitan Area (an informal initiative) was established in 2005	2
Kraków (Cracow)	In 2004–2006, the Forum of Municipalities of Cracow Metropolitan Area was established, dealing mainly with urban planning issues	1
Lublin	No agglomeration organization (only forms of loose sectorial cooperation, e. g. LUBINVEST)	0
Łódź	A letter of intent regarding the establishment of cooperation within Łódź Metropolitan Area was signed in 2012 <sup>c</sup>	0
Olsztyn	Informal Olsztyn Agglomeration Area was established in 2009 (since 1997 Warmian Joint Committee has been active, consisting of the municipalities of Olsztyn county without the city of Olsztyn)	2
Opole	In 2011, the mayor of Opole took the initiative to establish a joint committee. In 2012, an agreement on cooperation within the area of Opole agglomeration was signed. In December 2013, an association was established, consisting of 20 municipalities	1
Poznań	Poznań Metropolis Association has been active since 2011 (from 2007 to 2011 the name of the organization was Poznań Agglomeration Council)	4
Rzeszów	“Rzeszów Agglomeration” Local Government Association was established in 2008, Kołsut (2015: 203) mentions strong tensions between the core city and the rest of the area	2
Szczecin	Szczecin Metropolitan Area Association, founded on the basis of the Local Governments Association for Regional Cooperation operating in 2005–2009, has been active since 2009	4
Warsaw	Warsaw Metropolis Association has operated (or at least existed) since 2000. The activity of the capital city is irregular and very poor, indicative of conflicts between Warsaw and the neighbouring municipalities rather than of cooperation	1

there is a tendency to limit the formality of cooperative solutions, especially in areas lacking positive experience of cooperation.

Our study includes all the city regions (agglomerations) which – as regional capitals and their surroundings – are included in the obligatory programme of ITI implementation. The Ministry proposed exactly the same scope of ITI to each of the 17 metropolitan regions, even though the city-regions vary greatly in terms of population and socio-economic development (see Table 2). Following this ministerial logic we have assumed that we may treat all city-regions as a more or less homogeneous group. Another argument supporting this assumption is that the mechanisms of internal cooperation within city-regions are not determined by the exact number of population covered by cooperation. Mechanisms of cooperation remain largely the same, no matter whether 14 or 20 municipalities are involved. The

size of a city-region is likely to influence the institutionalization of the cooperation, not its mere mechanisms. More functional differences are generated by the morphology of the city-region (monocentric versus polycentric) which we try to include briefly in the next section.

As a result, we adopt the term “metropolitan regions” for all functionally bounded city-regions existing around regional capitals in Poland.

## 4 Research Context

### 4.1 Metropolitan Governance in Poland Before the Introduction of the ITI Instrument

There has been discussion on metropolitan governance and initiatives of metropolitan cooperation in Poland since the



**Table 1** Institutions of metropolitan cooperation in Polish agglomerations before the introduction of Integrated Territorial Investment (Continued)

ITI association	Metropolitan cooperation before 2014	Rating <sup>a</sup>
Wrocław	In 1999–2005, there was a Strategic Plan of Wrocław Agglomeration Committee. Thereafter, the initiative came to a halt. In 2006, a single-task Wrocław Agglomeration Development Agency was established to provide services for private investors. It is still active and expanding territorial coverage of its functions. In 2013 the Association of Municipalities and Counties of Wrocław Agglomeration was launched, yet its area and scope of functions are limited (e. g. not all municipalities adjacent to Wrocław are members; see Kołsut 2015: 196)	1
Zielona Góra	In 2006, an agreement was signed between three municipalities: Zielona Góra, Nowa Sól and Sulechów, acting as Lubusz Tricity	1

<sup>a</sup>Subjective evaluation of intensity and status of metropolitan cooperation prior to the introduction of ITI instrument, based on desk research carried out in 2015 (including literature review and website analysis) and field research conducted in 2006–2015 within various projects.

5 – the highest level of formalization in the form of a municipalities' joint committee, the most intensive activity including numerous joint projects, regular member meetings, metropolitan press releases, international presentations and cooperation, vibrant website (a/o evaluation of the website and interviews with the employees of the joint committee's office)

4 – active cooperation in the form of an association (the intensity of the activity was measured, a/o by evaluating the website and through field research). Activity involves at least one joint project, regular member meetings, and a functioning website

3 – cooperation in the form of an association, moderate activity (a/o by evaluating the website) including irregular member meetings, individual joint projects (often remaining plans rather than completed undertakings), and usually a basic website

2 – low intensity cooperation (formal or not), with some attempt to make it more than just declarative (the actors have tried to act together), usually with a not updated website

1 – there have been some episodes of agreements or joint declarations but they have been neither formalized nor turned into real action

0 – no metropolitan cooperation in the past (or cooperation initiated from scratch for the purpose of Integrated Territorial Investment, not long before 2014)

<sup>b</sup>Our evaluation (5) has a strong institutional basis. Katowice Metropolitan Joint Committee is the only one in Poland which has the status of the most strongly formalized legal structure. Moreover, various activities are also well-developed there, even though their assessment is not unanimous (see Kołsut 2015: 192)

<sup>c</sup>Cooperation in the Łódź region dates back to 2012, although analysis of the materials proved that the needs of Integrated Territorial Investment were the main reason for starting the cooperation. Hence the assessment of the cooperation is relatively poor

beginning of the 1990s (see Kaczmarek/Mikuła 2007; Lackowska 2009). This was the period when “metropolitan” legislative initiatives appeared, proposed both by local milieus connected with particular metropolitan regions and by national institutions. One of the factors hindering the implementation of such solutions, not only in Poland but also in other countries (Lackowska/Norris 2014), was the limited political importance of the issue of metropolitan governance. Due to the difficulties connected with setting up a general legal framework for the operation of metropolitan regions, a “do nothing option” (Goldsmith 2005: 82) is often chosen, in the hope that the local governments will deal with organizational and functional problems somehow, without any special solutions from above.

In recent years, discussion on the metropolises has been more vigorous. In the National Spatial Development Concept 2030, there are three groups of so-called urban functional areas<sup>7</sup>, the first gathers in ten cities (Warsaw, Cracow, Łódź, Katowice, Wrocław, Poznań, Gdańsk,

Szczecin, Bydgoszcz, Lublin), each of them with a surrounding metropolitan region.

At the end of September 2015, after several years of work, the Polish parliament passed the Act on Metropolitan Associations.<sup>8</sup> The Act was elaborated with no relation to the ITI instrument, which since 2014 has been an important impulse to develop metropolitan intermunicipal structures (see Sect. 5). It seems that metropolitan reform is being introduced through the back door, or rather by building a new door just next to the existing one of the Integrated Territorial Investment.

As no structures have yet been created under the Act on Metropolitan Joint Committees, local governments in the metropolitan regions of Poland could choose the “do nothing option” or cooperate within the framework of a number of general legal forms including agreements, associations and joint committees. Cooperation without any specific legal form is also quite a popular choice (see Table 1). We found such informal structures of cooperation in Kielce, Olsztyn, Cracow, Wrocław and Tricity (a metropolitan region consisting of three Pomeranian cities: Gdańsk, Gdynia

<sup>7</sup> “Urban functional area” is the term used in many Polish documents. However, in this paper we use the term “metropolitan region” which is more popular in the international literature. The three groups of urban functional areas indicated in national documents are distinguished according to their size in terms of the number of inhabitants (the first group comprises the largest metropolitan regions, the last one subregional centres).

<sup>8</sup> According to the act, metropolitan associations may be established in the metropolitan regions, and may bring together municipalities and counties. The representatives of such an association will be appointed by the member administrative units.

**Table 2** Number of members and legal form of Integrated Territorial Investments in regional capital agglomerations in Poland (July 2015)<sup>e</sup>

ITI	Number of municipalities according to the delimitation by the Ministry	Finally established number of municipalities <sup>a</sup>	Number of inhabitants of the core city (thousands) <sup>b</sup>	Number of inhabitants of the whole ITI area (thousands) <sup>c</sup>	Legal form
Białystok	9	9	295	412	Association
Bydgoszcz & Toruń	19	24	361 + 204	853	Agreement <sup>d</sup>
Gdańsk, Gdynia & Sopot	19	30 + 6 c	461 + 238 + 37	1,270	Association
Gorzów Wielkopolski	5	5	125	157	Agreement
Katowice	46	73 + 8 c	309	2,760	Association
Kielce	10	12	201	340	Agreement
Kraków	23	14	759	1,034	Association
Lublin	15	16	343	535	Agreement
Łódź	19	23 + 4 c	722	1,116	Association
Olsztyn	7	7	175	230	Agreement
Opole	12	21	122	337	Association
Poznań	21	22 + 1 c	551	1,009	Association
Rzeszów	14	13	180	356	Agreement
Szczecin	9	13 + 1 c + region	409	687	Association
Warszawa (Warsaw)	50	40	1,711	2,700	Agreement
Wrocław	15	15	632	888	Agreement
Zielona Góra	6	6	119	185	Agreement

<sup>a</sup>c county (Polish *powiat*), meso tier of local government in Poland<sup>b</sup>data from the official websites of the 17 ITIs<sup>c</sup>data from the official websites of the 17 ITIs<sup>d</sup>Bydgoszcz is the intermediate body for the whole ITI association, although Toruń proposed that the two cities play this role by rotation (Olewiński 2015)<sup>e</sup>The institutional structures were being modified at the time of the compilation of this paper, therefore the solutions described may not be final, although far-reaching changes seem unlikely at this stage of the political process.

and Sopot). It is quite difficult to obtain proper evidence because such forums of informal cooperation are not recorded in any registries and they often do not even have a website.<sup>9</sup> In cases when there is also no information about the cooperation on the websites of member municipalities, we can safely assume that the activities are of only minimal significance. Loosely coupled systems (Orton/Weick 1990) are more likely to cease to exist than more formal ones. Without legal status, it is difficult to perform specific tasks, for instance due to the lack of sufficient financial resources. It is also hard to enforce the engagement of the partners; in a situation where action (or the cessation of an activity) within this system has no legal consequences, there is a growing tendency for partners to become free-riders.

Metropolitan agreements and associations are more formalized. However, according to the results of in-depth studies, conducting actual activity is not so obvious even in the case of associations. The Warsaw metropolitan re-

gion is a good example of this situation, with an association called the Warsaw Metropolis Association that has operated (or at least existed) since 2000. The capital city, showing little interest in such a form of cooperation with its neighbours, remained outside the Association until 2006, creating a fascinating example of a metropolitan institution without the participation of the core city (Frankowski/Szmytkowska 2015). This state of affairs was one of the factors that led to the Association being considered an organization lobbying against the centre of the agglomeration on behalf of the municipalities surrounding the core. Since 2006, the attitude of Warsaw towards the Association has not changed much. The city does not consider this organization to be an important political actor. The Association, weakened by the ambiguous attitude of the capital city, is not a very vigorous organization. Its activities are rather advisory and deliberative and it has not really achieved any specific results yet.

There is also reason for concern about the Rzeszów Agglomeration Local Governments Association. Cooperation in this case mainly involves the implementation of two projects, especially a project regarding wider coopera-

<sup>9</sup> This is why we cannot exclude the possibility that there were some metropolitan cooperation institutions in previous years that have not been included in our analysis, but desk research (including the newest elaborations on inter-municipal cooperation in Poland, like Kołsut (2015) and Frankowski/Szmytkowska (2015)) did not provide us with any information on them.

tion between Poland and Slovakia<sup>10</sup>. It is no mystery that Rzeszów has been adopting a policy of annexation towards neighbouring municipalities, which seems to contradict the idea of cooperation (Kulesza 2006). The very content of the website also raises doubts regarding its reliability. The association is described as consisting of 11 municipalities and Rzeszów county, while the city of Rzeszów itself is not included in the list of members.

Actually, there are only two metropolitan associations which can be said to be active – Poznań, and to a slightly lesser degree the Szczecin agglomeration. The purpose of Poznań Metropolis Association (SMP) is to coordinate and stimulate sectorial cooperation, which can be managed by single-task organizations with various territorial ranges. At the moment, the activities of the Poznań Metropolis Association include, among others, a project involving urban planning funded with EU funds and the project of the Poznań Metropolitan Railway.

Szczecin Metropolitan Region Association (SSOM) was founded on the basis of the Local Governments Association for Regional Cooperation operating in 2005–2009. Examples of tasks carried out by the association include “Polish-English Meetings on Bike Trails”, the SSOM Economic Award granted annually, the publishing of a local newspaper and the preparation of several strategy papers for the metropolitan region. Both associations were beneficiaries of EU funds.

The most advanced form of metropolitan cooperation can be found in the case of the Metropolitan Joint Committee of Upper Silesia, which also uses the marketing name “Silesia”. This is the only case of a multi-sectorial metropolitan institution in Poland that is organized as a joint committee of municipalities (*związek międzygminny*). Silesia does its best to acquire EU funds, promotes its members internationally, issues a monthly periodical called “Metropolia Silesia”, and is working on a metropolitan bicycle transportation system.

There is no doubt about the high level of diversity of forms of metropolitan governance in Poland. Of the total 17 agglomerations included in the research at the very beginning of the process of creating ITI associations, in three (Gorzów Wielkopolski, Lublin and to some extent Łódź) there was no metropolitan cooperation, and in ten the cooperation is at the moment very limited (like in Rzeszów), only sectorial (like in Wrocław), or conflict ridden (Bydgoszcz & Toruń, Tricity, Warsaw). In the remaining regions we can find both advanced cooperation initiatives (the most advanced include Katowice, Poznań and Szczecin (in descending order; for more details on the initiatives see Lack-

owska 2014), and less effective ones; e. g. in the case of Tricity).

#### 4.2 Integrated Territorial Investments – A New Instrument of the Cohesion Policy Stimulating Cooperation in Urban Functional Areas

Instruments designed for cities only appeared in the cohesion policy at the beginning of the 1990s, just after the reform of regional policy that was introduced at the end of the last decade along with the treaty of the European Union. Subsequent initiatives, programmes and networks of cooperation (e. g. URBAN, URBACT) increased the importance of this kind of solution in the European political debate.

The financial framework 2007–2013 brought about profound changes in the attitude of EU institutions towards issues of urban policy. A decision was made to end the URBAN initiative which had operated for several years. Instead, urban issues were taken into account when planning activities within the main EU funds and cohesion policy programmes to a greater extent than before. An EU initiative called JESSICA (Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas) was introduced to manage the complex issues of urban areas, enabling the implementation of sophisticated urban development projects with financing that included repayable funds.

Despite profound changes in the shape and scope of cohesion policy instruments designed for cities, evaluation research continued to point out the problem of shortfall in the territorial coordination of projects co-financed with the funds of the European Union (Barca 2009: 27). This was one of the reasons why the provisions of the treaties regarding the Community’s pursuit of social and economic cohesion were supplemented with content connected to the territorial dimension. Due to the insufficient territorial coordination of the activities of cohesion policy, the added value of the implemented projects was still too low (see Barca 2009). A so-called micro-macro paradox was often observed (see Uusikyla 2009; Howes/Otor/Rogers 2011): thus very effectively implemented and positively evaluated local projects were less effective when it came to achieving the general goals of the whole policy, of which they were mere elements. This lack of coordination was apparent especially in the case of the projects implemented in the vicinity of the cities. Moreover, in the meantime it has emerged that the actions of the cities are of crucial importance for the course and dynamics of processes of development (Barca 2009).

Due to the situation described above, in the financial framework 2014–2020 the European Commission included the possibility for member states to introduce cohesion policy programmes with a new instrument: *Integrated Territorial Investments*. It was designed to help in the elimi-

<sup>10</sup> <http://aglomeracjarzeszowska.pl/aglomeracja-rzeszowska> (July 29, 2016).



nation of the negative phenomena connected with the insufficient coordination of the programmes based on EU funds and the resulting inefficiency of those activities. It is defined as “a tool to implement territorial strategies in an integrated [...] [and] a cross-cutting way and to draw on funding from several priority axes of one or more Operational Programmes to ensure the implementation of an integrated strategy for a specific territory” (European Commission 2014: 2).

According to very general recommendations by the European Commission, Integrated Territorial Investments may be created in areas that share the same problem. Therefore, the form of Integrated Territorial Investments forces different administrative units to establish or intensify cooperation, depending on local and national context.

Urban agglomerations are the most obvious and most common area of implementation of Integrated Territorial Investments. However, they can also be created in different territorial settings, e. g. in seaside areas. They can also be established as an instrument designed for a specific category, e. g. sub-regional centres (in this case, the area of Integrated Territorial Investments does not have to be a single entity, but may consist of several remote parts). Some of the countries took the opportunity not to introduce this instrument at all, as Integrated Territorial Investments is an optional solution. In Belgium, Germany and the UK, Integrated Territorial Investments have been introduced only in some chosen areas of the country (in the Flemish region, Baden-Württemberg and Schleswig-Holstein, and England respectively) and several countries are most likely not to choose this solution at all in the years 2014–2020 (e. g. Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Ireland and Sweden) (Council of European Municipalities and Regions 2014: 5).

In Poland, the operation of Integrated Territorial Investments was set up in a rather detailed manner by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development. In contrast to the rest of Europe, 17 areas were chosen, surrounding the capitals of the regions, where the creation of Integrated Territorial Investments was virtually an obligation, as it is a condition of acquiring large amounts of EU funds to be spent in these areas for the years 2014–2020. The “Principles Governing the Implementation of Integrated Territorial Investments in Poland” clearly states that the municipality is the basic unit of Integrated Territorial Investments. In July 2013, at the time of the preparations to establish Integrated Territorial Investments, the Ministry issued these principles with an appendix including propositions for the delimitation of particular metropolitan regions which served as points of reference in the debate on the territorial scope of particular

Integrated Territorial Investments.<sup>11</sup> The interpretation of the subsequent statements contained in the document was made more specific, for instance by acting on the principles of the implementation of cohesion policy programmes based on the funds of the financial framework 2014–2020 of August 2014 and a number of recommendations issued by the Ministry.

The following goals were set for Integrated Territorial Investments in Poland (Ministry of Regional Development 2013: 4):

- To facilitate the development of cooperation and integration in the functional areas of Polish cities,
- To promote a partnership model of cooperation of different administrative units in urban functional areas,
- To implement integrated projects designed to address the needs and problems of Polish cities and their functional areas in a comprehensive manner, and
- To increase the impact of the cities and their functional areas on the scope and shape of the cohesion policy programmes implemented in their area.

Local governments planning to introduce Integrated Territorial Investments were obliged to establish an institutional form of partnership (e. g. agreement, association, joint committee or even a company) and to prepare a joint strategy for each Integrated Territorial Investment. Existing strategy papers did not suffice to fulfil this obligation as there had to be a separate document designed for the specific purpose of Integrated Territorial Investments. Moreover, in order for the funds to be granted from a Regional Operational Programme for the purpose of the implementation of Integrated Territorial Investments, local governments had to enter an agreement with the regional government on the implementation of Integrated Territorial Investments. According to the European Commission concept, repayable financial instruments and the opportunity to combine various types of action and sources of funding, for example the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund or Cohesion Fund, should be key elements that ensure the comprehensiveness of projects implemented as part of Integrated Territorial Investments. However, Poland decided that particular Regional Operational Programmes will be the basic and the only guaranteed source of financing for the projects, and the rest of the programmes will play an auxiliary role. Another important point is that, according to the rules set up by the Ministry, it is obligatory for ITI to include at least a few different sectors of cooperation. Such a solution made it impossible to simply transfer

<sup>11</sup> According to the data presented in the remainder of the article, Integrated Territorial Investments were only established exactly within the borders proposed in this document in some cases.

tasks related to the management of Integrated Territorial Investments to pre-existing single-purpose institutions.

All these regulations introduced by the Polish government in response to the light adaptive pressure of the European Commission have greatly increased this pressure for local governments. In this way, by means of “overregulation”, Poland has become “the best pupil in the class” – the state which diligently and sedulously implemented the instrument offered by the EU.

## 5 Integrated Territorial Investments in Polish Metropolitan Regions

As we already mentioned, the Polish authorities left the local governments a certain amount of choice with regard to the legal form the ITI association should assume. During work on the introduction of Integrated Territorial Investments, it emerged that the government aimed to grant the ITI associations the scope of authority enjoyed by intermediate bodies, which in many cases resulted in modifications to the decisions that had been made about the institutions of cooperation to be introduced among the municipalities.<sup>12</sup>

According to the data above, despite the far-reaching arbitrariness of the formal and legal requirements for ITI associations, the general tendency is to institutionalize them to the least possible degree. Despite the fact that the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development accepted the option of transferring the tasks of an ITI association to joint committees and even companies, these forms of strongly binding cooperation were not chosen in any of the cases. Instead, in nine cases the decision was made to choose the least binding form of agreement, and eight further areas decided for the more binding form of association. This is a sign of the reluctance of local authorities to strictly institutionalize new political entities in the metropolis. The order to cooperate did not encounter much resistance, although it also did not result in a change of attitudes towards cooperation at the level of metropolis. This is indicated by relatively strong criticism of the ITIs’ strategies. The critics draw attention to the fact that there is a tendency to include numerous, but not necessarily interconnected, projects of a local scale of impact in the documents (Kozak 2015). However, it may be considered positive that the territorial scope of the ITI associations is the same as the territories

assigned to the urban functional areas by the Ministry in only five cases (Białystok, Gorzów Wielkopolski, Olsztyn, Wrocław, Zielona Góra), as this shows a certain flexibility among the decision-makers (see Frankowski/Szmytkowska 2015).

The structure of cooperation has been modified in the majority of agglomerations – in most cases widened. The number of local governments accepted as members of Integrated Territorial Investments was seriously limited only in the cases of Warsaw and Cracow – in both metropolises the tradition of cooperation was either very negative (Warsaw) or almost non-existent (Cracow). According to the theory of cooperation, the greater the number of partners, the more difficult it is to cooperate (there is a growing differentiation of interests, greater number of conflicting opinions, more partners to coordinate and encourage to be active). Accordingly, we can see the limitation of the number of municipalities that are members of the Warsaw and Cracow ITI associations as a kind of failure, or alternatively as at least a sign that there is some awareness of the problems associated with cooperation, resulting in the choice of an easier form of cooperation with a smaller number of partners.

Taking into account the experience of metropolitan cooperation in Poland described above and restrictions set up by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development, several scenarios of solutions applied in particular agglomerations may be identified. We can assume that the solutions chosen for the purpose of Integrated Territorial Investments modify the local political and institutional context. In the 17 Polish metropolitan regions four types of situation can be found – one where Integrated Territorial Investments are the first form of metropolitan cooperation and three where there have been past attempts to cooperate.

*Late Pioneers:* In cases when there had not previously been any formal institution of cooperation, Integrated Territorial Investments provided an impulse to establish it. On the one hand, this kind of scenario poses the risk of a long process of formation of cooperation mechanisms and also that local actors may feel forced to adopt certain unfamiliar solutions (superficial type of Europeanization called absorption, see Bache 2008). This may result in only the apparent or purely instrumental application of an ITI instrument which may be used exclusively when necessary to acquire external funds. On the other hand, it may allow for the shaping of the model of cooperation in accordance with ITI standards and without the burden of past experience and pre-existing mechanisms of communication and cooperation. This is the case in Lublin and both capitals of the Lubuskie Region: Zielona Góra and Gorzów Wielkopolski. In all three cases, the Integrated Territorial Investments have the loosest form possible – that of agreements. Reflecting the lack of tradition of cooperation in these urban regions, the final delimitations were the same

<sup>12</sup> In the case of an association, which is a legal entity, the association itself can take on the role of an intermediate body. In case of an agreement, the role of the intermediate body is assigned to the core city of the agglomeration. The intermediate body is responsible, a/o, for selecting the projects which are to be implemented (although the decision-making model may be adapted to local circumstances in a given case). Therefore, a solution whereby this role is played by one of the partners may generate conflicts at subsequent stages.

as those proposed by the Ministry (in case of Lublin the area of Integrated Territorial Investments included one additional municipality). A similar situation is found in Łódź and Opole. The traditions of cooperation that resulted in the creation of both associations date back to 2012, but they were institutionalized just before the Integrated Territorial Investments were established, i. e. in the period when Integrated Territorial Investments were already being discussed. Moreover, according to the strategy papers on the websites of both metropolitan institutions, the scope of their activity is (at least at the moment) limited to managing the ITI.

*Re-builders:* There have been attempts in several agglomerations in the last couple of years to make cooperation more formal, but these initiatives did not turn out to be particularly active. Some of them have come to a halt, leaving the metropolis with no form of cooperation (Cracow, Bydgoszcz-Toruń area) and in some cases new organizations have come into being, which, however, can hardly be considered to include the whole metropolis. This is the case of Wrocław, where the Agglomeration Committee, having come to a halt, was “replaced” by a single-task agency dealing with investors’ services (see Table 1), which could not act as an ITI association (see Sect. 4). Consequently, Integrated Territorial Investments were created independently of the existing metropolitan agency. In the capital city, the Warsaw Metropolis Association maintains only a minimal level of activity and does not really facilitate cooperation in the region. In all these cases, Integrated Territorial Investments can hardly be considered an impulse to establish cooperation; it can rather be called a new beginning. This scenario includes a threat of the burden of experience of past episodes of cooperation, of projecting old conflicts, fears and mechanisms on the ITI structure. This is the case for example in Białystok, where in 2009 a declaration of cooperation within the Białystok Metropolitan Area was signed by 20 municipalities with the hope to acquire EU funds. After 2013 the ITI association in the Białystok agglomeration was established with a totally different, much more limited territorial scope.<sup>13</sup> In the case of Warsaw, the core-city authorities consciously tried not to follow the tradition of the existing Warsaw Metropolis Association because the surrounding municipalities remembered the deprecating attitude of Warsaw towards cooperation with its neighbours. The decision was made to write a new page in the history of cooperation in the area.

*Competitors:* There are relatively numerous cases when an ITI association was established in parallel to the already existing forms of metropolitan cooperation, in some cases even with a similar territorial scope. However, the

two institutions (Integrated Territorial Investments and the previous form of cooperation) act as separate entities. Examples of such a situation can be found in Upper Silesia, in Rzeszów, in Olsztyn and in Kielce. It is reasonable to distinguish between two subtypes, depending on the level of intensity of metropolitan cooperation: (a) areas where the metropolitan institution is quite active (like Upper Silesia) and (b) areas where there is little activity (like Kielce and Olsztyn).<sup>14</sup> In the first case (a) we may expect the two institutions to compete and the further development of the metropolitan organization that is deprived of potential power over ITI funds is rather uncertain. In the case of Upper Silesia it is initially surprising that the most powerful metropolitan institution in Poland was not utilized to implement Integrated Territorial Investments, but taking a closer look at the history of the regional operational programme in Silesia provides an explanation. The last financial framework for the years 2007–2013 saw the implementation of a plan to manage a significant part of EU funds through four sub-regional programmes, covering the total area of the whole region (Swianiewicz/Krukowska/Lackowska 2013; Krukowska 2014). After 2014, it was decided to continue this solution and the Integrated Territorial Investments of the Upper Silesia conurbation were covered by the development programme for the central sub-region. Hence, it turns out that the decision not to empower Silesia by aligning it with Integrated Territorial Investments was not an intentional blow against the metropolitan institution but rather demonstrated a will to base cooperation in the region on the other tradition of cooperation – the regional operation programme, already functioning in Upper Silesia. In the second case (b), the metropolitan organization is probably not a great threat to the ITI association. In the most probable scenario, the organization will, with time, be totally superseded by the association on the political scene. In Kielce, in 2014, local actors said that the activity of the Kielce Metropolitan Area (KOM, established in 2005) will be probably taken over by Kielce Functional Area (KOF), established in 2012 in connection with Integrated Territorial Investments (Jakubowska 2014).

*Heirs:* Finally, in several cases, the tasks of the ITI association have been transferred to the pre-existing institution of metropolitan cooperation. This solution was fully applied only in two agglomerations: in Poznań (Poznań Metropolis Association) and in Szczecin (Szczecin Metropolitan Area Association). On the one hand, there is little doubt about the great stability of the structures of

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.pb.pl/1745920,86351,20-samorzadow-deklaruje-wspolprace-w-ramach-bialostockiego-obszaru-metropolitalnego> (July 29, 2016).

<sup>14</sup> The distinction between “re-builders” and “competitors” of the type b is difficult to draw clearly. For the purpose of our typology we refer to the assessment presented in Table 1: metropolitan regions with a rating 1 are classified as “re-builders”, whilst others rated from 2 to 3 (where Integrated Territorial Investments are not based on a previously existing institutional structure) are classified as “competitors”.

cooperation and the relatively high level of satisfaction of the partners with the previous operation of these institutions (as they decided to assign the tasks of the ITI association to them). On the other hand, this kind of solution includes the risk of complications connected with the adaptation of the shape of the pre-existing structures to the formal requirements of an ITI association. Another consequence of this solution is the limitation of the opportunity to change the territorial scope of Integrated Territorial Investments, which is automatically the same as the scope of the pre-existing metropolitan entity. This proved a problem especially in the case of the Integrated Territorial Investment of the Poznań agglomeration, whose territorial scope differs greatly from the delimitation of the urban functional area by the Ministry (despite the fact that the number of local government members is almost the same, see Table 2). Compared to the other agglomerations, the process of organizing the preparatory works before implementing Integrated Territorial Investments in the metropolitan region of Poznań has been very effective. As early as March 2015 an agreement was signed between the association and the Marshal's Office<sup>15</sup> regarding the establishment of Integrated Territorial Investments and assigning the tasks of the intermediate body Regional Operational Programme to the association.

The case of Tricity poses a separate subcategory here. In late 2012, the inactive Metropolitan Council (RMZG, see Table 1) gave way to two competing metropolitan organizations – one established by Gdańsk (GOM), and the other by Gdynia (NORDA). It was hardly surprising that at the beginning of ITI negotiations none of these three metropolitan institutions was accepted as a basis for Integrated Territorial Investments. One of them (RMZG) had been inactive for years, and neither of the two new forms covered the whole metropolitan core (GOM does not include Gdynia, whereas NORDA does not include Gdańsk). It was mid-2015 before the local governments agreed that the new institution – Metropolitan Association Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot – should be created for the purpose of managing Integrated Territorial Investments. The case of Tricity thus clearly furnishes strong proof of the influence of Europeanization in Poland and demonstrates the way in which pressure from above leads to the far-reaching modification of the metropolitan structures of cooperation.

An important point is that all the above situations are similarly frequent in Poland and there is no pattern to suggest a link to the structure of the city-region. What seems to matter is the size of the core city and the whole ITI area. Big city-regions (above 400,000 inhabitants in the core city and/or more than 700,000 inhabitants in the whole city-region) chose the form of association more often (6) than the

form of agreement (3), whereas for small regions the opposite is true (six chose an agreement, and only two chose an association). There are slightly more situations where there had already been some form of legal cooperation (often very loose), but actual cooperation was profoundly limited. Each of the abovementioned situations can have both negative and positive consequences for the success of metropolitan cooperation. Table 3 shows a compilation of the most important statements of our discussion.

## 6 Conclusions

We are witnessing very interesting transformations on the Polish metropolitan scene. For the first time since Poland's accession to the Union, EU funds are being utilized as a mechanism which facilitates cooperation in city regions. This is also the first national-level initiative in Poland to enforce metropolitan cooperation. Taking into account the results of past attempts to legally regulate this issue, the Union's incentive in the form of Integrated Territorial Investments has had a mobilizing effect on Poland in this field. An important point is that not all member states decided to follow the recommendation.

In the case of Poland, the guidelines provided by the Union were made far more precise by the state authorities. One of the most profound specific interpretations of the Union's provisions was that the creation of ITI associations by the regional capital cities was made a necessary condition of acquiring EU funds in those cities, as well as in the surrounding areas. It seems that Poland, rather than merely meeting the expectations of the Committee in this respect, became "the best pupil in the class". We can observe a peculiar mechanism of twofold pressure from above, which in the terms proposed by the rhetoric of Europeanization is called "double top-down". The above observation is somewhat in line with the intergovernmentalists' claim that the state plays the role of a gate-keeper with regard to sub-national levels (Grosse 2009). The difference is that gate-keeping was originally a term describing the mechanism that selects elements of macro-regional integration that are allowed to enter the national level, whereas in our analysis we refer to a selection that allows a change to occur, accompanied by a far-reaching and detailed interpretation of the recommendations provided by the Union. This is how the idea of the "national colours of Europeanisation", developed by Risse, Cowles and Caporaso (2001), is turned into reality. However, the Polish ITI associations reach even further. Local actors have the freedom to choose the legal form they will adopt and this has resulted in some diversity of the solutions applied, something we cannot call national, nor even local, but "metropolitan" colours of Europeanization.

<sup>15</sup> Marshal is the head of the regional self-government.

**Table 3** Possible positive and negative effects of introducing the ITI instrument in various local contexts

	Late pioneers (ITI as the first form of cooperation)	Re-builders (ITI built on the basis of poor institutions of cooperation)	Competitors (ITI in parallel with other institutions)	Heirs (ITI based on pre-existing, effective institutions)
Possible positive effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Initiating cooperation, breaking the deadlock;</li> <li>– Opportunity to flexibly adjust the structure to the needs of ITI;</li> <li>– “Blank state” – no negative experience of cooperation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Cooperation renewed in a new institutional form;</li> <li>– Effective impulse mobilizing cooperation;</li> <li>– Opportunity to benefit from experience and skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Opportunity of cooperation between the two institutions, possible synergy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Solid base of stable and well-known structures;</li> <li>– Benefits from the experience of cooperation, effective communication channels;</li> <li>– Feeling of continuity with the activities of the metropolises instead of sudden enforcement of new solutions</li> </ul>
Possible negative effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Risk of delays and additional costs due to the need to build new structures;</li> <li>– No experience;</li> <li>– No habit of cooperation, which may result in the feeling that the enforced cooperation is superficial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The burden of the experience of unsuccessful cooperation;</li> <li>– Long-standing conflicts;</li> <li>– Difficulties in finding common interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Increased institutional fragmentation (negotiations and cooperation more complicated);</li> <li>– Dissipation of energy and unnecessary duplication of work;</li> <li>– Negative competition, rivalry between the two institutions;</li> <li>– Non-compatible territorial scopes;</li> <li>– Risk of the previous form coming to a halt due to partners focusing on ITI (providing additional financing), not enough resources left for the other forms of cooperation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Territorial scope the same as the pre-existing one;</li> <li>– Need to adjust the institutional structures and the manner of operation to the new requirements</li> </ul>

Our discussion therefore provides an argument in support of the thesis that Europeanization does not lead to convergence among member states, as was expected at the beginning of research on European integration (Lodge 2006). Reactions to the same double top-down pressure were different in different metropolitan contexts, confirming our main hypothesis. It seems that reality is a bit closer to the model of “clustered convergence” proposed by Börzel (1999), according to which Europeanization may result in the convergence of the effects of the policy (although it may take some time to see if this really is the case) along with the divergence of the specific processes, instruments and systemic solutions applied. Local conditions may determine the reaction of urban regions towards the double top-down pressure, and the hypothesis that the local actors maintain the ability to shape reality in a unique local context has been proved correct. Yet, despite the variety of processes reacting to the pressure, their long-term effects can occur in a similar (converging) fashion. This is one of the directions that is wide open for future research.

We analysed the institutionalization of Integrated Territorial Investments not only in the light of Europeanization, but also within the framework of metropolitan governance (which itself was originally completely unconnected to Eu-

ropeanization). First, we confirm our second hypothesis, which assumed that metropolitan areas would choose the least legally binding structures for the ITI instrument. Indeed, none of the regions (even the one with well-established metropolitan cooperation) chose the strongest form of organization. Second, as proved by the experience of other countries, the most sustainable solution in terms of the effects of the implemented metropolitan institutions is to combine regulations imposed from above (granting suitable permissions, providing a legal basis for cooperation) with bottom-up initiatives proving the readiness and will to cooperate among the local partners (Lackowska 2009). There are only two cases of a perfect combination of these two factors – Szczecin and Poznań (heirs in our typology). In case of our third type of urban regions (competitors), we can observe a partial fulfilment of the criteria. A tradition of cooperation already exists, and the mechanisms of cooperation between the partners, willing or not, are utilized, even if the Integrated Territorial Investments were not built on the basis of a pre-existing metropolitan organization. We expect the most profound difficulties in the operation of Integrated Territorial Investments to be encountered in those agglomerations where there is no experience of metropolitan cooperation (late pioneers) or this experience is negative



(re-builders). This last condition indicates that a tradition of cooperation, in the literature generally considered as a factor that facilitates metropolitan governance, may turn out to be a hindering factor if it involves a destruction of trust among the partners.

It is necessary to ask whether such weak institutional structures will survive after Integrated Territorial Investments come to a halt within the financial framework 2014–2020, and whether they will ever become platforms of wider cooperation, broader than the narrow limits of Integrated Territorial Investments. Most alarming is that the debate concerning the solutions facilitating metropolitan cooperation (resulting in the passing of a special act) is totally divorced from the issue of the institutionalization of cooperation in the area of regional capitals for the purpose of Integrated Territorial Investments. On one hand, negotiations are conducted and solutions are applied to stimulate cooperation in the future, but on the other hand, an obligation to commence such cooperation has already been introduced, albeit rather covertly, due to the use of mechanisms to assign and utilize EU funds.

In the light of the above questions and identified threats, it seems reasonable to spend the couple of years until the end of the current financial framework on developing sustainable instruments to support metropolitan cooperation after 2020. Moreover, it may turn out that the ITI institutions, treated mainly as a source of income and developed under time pressure, will not provide a proper basis for future cooperation. In other words, they may not result in a good tradition of cooperation. It is still possible that after a couple of years we will observe some kind of convergence with regard to the situation of Polish cities. Those which were able to cooperate at the metropolitan level without external stimulation from the Integrated Territorial Investments will spend these years making cooperation wider and more sustainable. Those where Integrated Territorial Investments were implemented only as a source of income may well return to traditional individual governance within their own administrative limits. This would make cooperation around the main urban centres in Poland even more complicated and the implementation of universal metropolitan solutions even more difficult in the future.

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